



UWS Academic Portal

Cross-language mediation in foreign language teaching and testing, Maria Stathopoulou, Multilingual Matters, Bristol (2015), xi + 234pp

Antoniou, Celia

Published in:
System

DOI:
[10.1016/j.system.2017.07.014](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2017.07.014)

Published: 31/10/2017

Document Version
Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication on the UWS Academic Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Antoniou, C. (2017). Cross-language mediation in foreign language teaching and testing, Maria Stathopoulou, Multilingual Matters, Bristol (2015), xi + 234pp. *System*, 69, 185-186.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2017.07.014>

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the UWS Academic Portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact pure@uws.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Stathopoulou – Cross-Language Mediation in Foreign Language Teaching and Testing, Multilingual Matters, Bristol (2015). xi + 234pp.

Maria Stathopoulou's book reports on the findings of one of the few long-term research studies which explore interlinguistic mediation and, in particular, that of Greek learners/users of English. The emergence of multilingual and multicultural societies stresses the need for speakers to act as mediators and rely on more than one language to address communication breakdowns. Even though the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) has already included mediation as an important aspect of the language users' proficiency (Commission of the European Communities, 2007), as the author states, no descriptors or can-do statements are provided for this purpose. This is mainly due to lack of evidence on learner mediation performance (Alderson, 2007; Little, 2007).

Therefore, situated in the field of multilingualism, bilingual education and multilingual testing, the book explores the ways in which language learners can be effectively supported while crossing linguistic borders by combining information from texts written in different languages. Emphasis is on written mediation in English, produced on the basis of information in Greek written source texts. Drawing on data from the Greek national foreign language examination system, which leads to the State Certificate of Language Proficiency (Kratiko Pistopiitiko Glossomathias [KPG] certificate) the book discusses what cross-language (or interlingual) mediation entails, the involved processes, the challenges encountered by the mediator and the various types of written mediation strategies to fulfil communicative purposes. It also discusses a model for investigating the practice of written mediation. The author contextualizes the study by mentioning that the KPG exam battery is one of the rare examples of assessing mediation and implementing this type of assessment by including mediation

tasks (Dendrinos, 2006). Therefore, the book examines mediation as one of the key activities included in the CEFR and by taking the Greek national foreign language examinations as an example.

The book chapters are a combination of theoretical and empirically based information. Chapter 1 introduces the concept of cross-language mediation in language education and differentiates between the terms “mediation” and “translation” on the basis of strategy use (p. 5) that facilitates the language learning process. Then, Chapter 2 situates mediation in other disciplines and Chapter 3 refers to the social aspects of mediation within the context of translanguaging. In particular, translanguaging is discussed in the bilingual classroom context when students are invited to read or listen in one language and their output is expected in the other language.

Chapter 4 discusses the use of particular mediation tasks and establishes a connection between them and language testing. The tasks are aimed at B1 and higher levels according to CEFR and they also require the use of sociolinguistic knowledge, world experience and first language (L1) skills in order for learners to act as mediators between L1 and second language (L2) texts.

Following from the discussion of tasks, Chapter 5 continues by presenting an Inventory of Mediation Strategies (IMS). The mediation strategies were identified by textually analyzing the KPG candidates’ scripts (lexical corpus) and deciding on the strategies that could lead to successful mediation practice at different levels of performance according to tasks. In general, the author distinguished between two types of strategies which are discussed along with specific task examples while the chapter also provides information on the corpus coding scheme that was developed and used for marking up the test scripts.

Then, in Chapter 6 the relationship between mediation strategy use and task requirements was discussed and Chapter 7 examined the relationship of mediation strategy use and student proficiency levels from both a qualitative and quantitative perspective. It was found that students with higher proficiency levels produced test scripts where they mostly employed strategies that enabled them to interact with the texts and manipulate ideas instead of simply “moving” from the source text language into English by paraphrasing, for instance.

Chapter 8 concludes the book and discusses future directions by also noting the study’s limitations. Data analyses and findings from this study could contribute to standardizing measures for reliably assessing mediation competence and therefore complement the CEFR. It should be noted that the author’s discussion of mediated strategy use does not extend in the classroom setting and it does not also involve the analysis of any oral data. The main databases were the KPG English task database (with past paper test tasks) and the KPG English corpus (with written production and mediation test scripts from KPG candidates).

Finally, Chapter 9 is an opportunity for the author to discuss further the use of mediation tasks in language education settings and stress the important role that mediation can play in efforts to involve the use of L1 in the classroom but also towards rejecting “the native speaker model” (p. 222). Additional information could have been provided about the level of detail and training that was required for test takers to complete the designed mediation tasks and the skills that they were expected to develop/employ in order to successfully complete the tasks.

However, the work reported is still of interest as it explores the communicative practice of mediation and it is original as the analysis of the candidates’ test scripts was also followed by the analysis of written mediation tasks and their linguistic characteristics.

On the whole, the book might be of interest to a large group of researchers, curriculum designers, syllabus and material developers and educators including international language testing bodies that focus on monolingual testing. With the current ‘English-only’ policies, the author proposes the development of frameworks for the assessment of the test-takers’ mediation competence. On the basis of this, the implementation of language programmes which emphasize the development of the language learners’ translanguaging practices are highly recommended.

References

Alderson, J. C. (2007). The CEFR and the need for more research. *The Modern Language Journal* 91, (4), 659-663.

Commission of the European Communities. (2007). *High Level Group on Multilingualism: Final Report*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

Dendrinos, B. (2006). Mediation in communication, language teaching and testing. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 22, 9-35.

Little, D. (2007). The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Perspectives on the making of supranational language education policy. *The Modern Language Journal*, 91, (4), 645-653.

Dr Celia Antoniou
Lecturer in Applied Linguistics and TESOL
University of Portsmouth
celia-vasiliki.antoniou@port.ac.uk